

after the city fell, Union forces began to work to restore the city's infrastructure and economic base. Before citizens could rebuild their city, they had to accommodate the demands of the occupying forces that were seizing provisions for distribution to refugees and released prisoners in addition to commandeering homes and churches for troop housing and hospitals. On February 27, 1865, General Schofield issued orders that allowed people who came forward voluntarily to swear an oath of allegiance to the United States and regain citizenship status. This move was one of many attempts by the military to improve the city's economy in the face of severe shortages. Those who were successful in appeals for citizenship were allowed to participate in commerce again, and the military sought to employ local labor in building projects. Many businessmen felt immense pressure to take the oath simply to maintain their businesses and keep them financially afloat. Additionally, Union soldiers represented practically the only group in the city with any purchasing power. To accommodate soldiers' needs, the military allowed certain merchants to import goods into the port through the blockade and purchased privately owned products such as cotton from locals.¹⁰⁰

As the city slowly began to recover from the physical effects of war and occupation, her citizens sought to protect themselves politically. Radical Reconstruction under the auspices of Congress did not begin in earnest nationwide until 1867. However, because of the Radical Republican nature of Wilmington's local occupying authority, North Carolina native Brigadier General Joseph Hawley, the city's Confederates faced a strong hand early in Reconstruction

while the downtrodden poor whites and blacks were given a hand up.¹⁰¹

In March 1865, while searching for the city's best path under occupation, incumbent mayor John Dawson called a "Grand Rally of the People" at City Hall/Thalian Hall, which was attended by around 1,000 of the city's residents. Federal soldiers were barred from attending the pro-Union rally, which was promoted as a meeting for the city's citizens to plan for her future. Amidst United States flags and pro-Union speeches, Mayor Dawson called for those attending to "live for the future resolving that henceforth it shall be our aim and object to secure peace, promote prosperity and add to the glory and grandeur of our common country."¹⁰² A committee was appointed to draw up eight resolutions, which were signed by those present explaining that the people of the city claimed to be citizens of the United States and advocated for the cessation of hostilities nationwide. Copies of the resolutions and signatures were sent to President Lincoln and Governor Vance. Wilmington was then ridiculed in Confederate papers and by other North Carolinians who felt the city had sold itself to ease its suffering even as men were still dying on the battlefield. Furthermore, the signers were maligned as being from one of three groups: foreigners, transplanted Yankees, or Confederate deserters. The names of eight "highly respectable gentlemen" found in the signatures presented the Confederacy with a conundrum, particularly since some of them had sons and brothers still fighting.¹⁰³

Despite an active Radical Republican element in place in Wilmington before the

¹⁰⁰ Fonvielle, *Wilmington Campaign*, 445, 452; Howell, *Book of Wilmington*, 147.

¹⁰¹ Hawley seized Cape Fear plantations and redistributed properties to former slaves and gave job-seeking blacks and whites assistance. Fonvielle, *Wilmington Campaign*, 456.

¹⁰² Mayor Dawson as quoted in Fonvielle, *Wilmington Campaign*, 457.

¹⁰³ Fonvielle, *The Wilmington Campaign*, 457-458.